

State Representative Paul Robertson

Helping Hoosier Families

113th Indiana General Assembly, Spring 2004

Session Report



Property
Tax Relief



Protecting
Children



Job
Creation





113th General Assembly Ends

Dear Friends,

The 2004 short session of the Indiana General Assembly has ended. I have detailed several important pieces of legislation in this newsletter, including property tax relief, children's safety issues and increased access to affordable prescription drugs.

I hope you find this information useful, and I will keep you updated over the next few months on other legislation that should have a positive impact on you and your family. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about state government.

Sincerely,



Property Tax Relief

When the Indiana General Assembly restructured our state's tax code in 2002, our primary goal was to give homeowners relief from the court-ordered reassessment. As the first series of assessments was completed, it became apparent that homeowners were facing an increasingly larger share of the burden passed to them by Indiana's courts.

Because of these concerns, House members led an effort to begin the 2004 session ahead of time. In November of 2003, legislators passed Senate Enrolled Act 1, which contained nearly **\$500 million in protection for homeowners, businesses and farms from property tax increases** due to the court-ordered reassessment and unchecked local levy increases.

When lawmakers returned in January, we resumed our efforts to give tax relief to the people who needed it most. We were able to

pass another measure, Senate Enrolled Act 296, that more than doubles **property tax deductions for seniors on lower incomes, World War I veterans, the blind and disabled**, as well as those who are rehabilitating homes.

House Enrolled Act 1005 takes steps to find other means of financing government services. One study committee will explore alternatives to the property tax, while another will examine the efficiency of local government operations.

This measure also sets up the groundwork for keeping property taxpayers better informed. A pilot program getting under way in 2005 will provide taxpayers in certain counties with detailed breakdowns on their **tax statements that will show where their tax dollars are being used**. Additionally, people who are financing or refinancing a home will be given information on the types of tax deductions available.

Robertson bill to strengthen homeland security, help families

This session, I introduced **House Bill 1254** to address licensing matters relative to learner's permits and probationary drivers. During the legislative session, issues regarding homeland security and Indiana's requirements for hazardous materials licenses became a concern, so we added language to my bill to clarify those questions as well.

As it passed, HB 1254, now **Public Law 48**, will help the Bureau of Motor Vehicles comply with federal requirements concerning background checks for individuals seeking hazardous materials endorsements for a commercial driver's license.

It also helps families with probationary drivers by allowing students who are under 18 years of age and hold learner's permits **or** are enrolled in an approved driver's education course to drive with a stepparent, as long as that individual holds a valid operator's license. Prior to this law being passed, only legal guardians or relatives could accompany student drivers who had not yet obtained a valid driver's license.

Helping Hoosier Families



Representative Robertson discusses legislation on the House floor with Rep. Bill Cochran (D-New Albany) and Rep. Bob Bischoff (D-Greendale).



Protecting Children

Legislators Address Safety Issues

During the 2004 session, several bills were passed to increase the safety of children. Legislators passed bills to protect children from abuse and neglect, and keep them safe in automobiles.

• **House Bill 1194** provides tools to protect children from abuse or neglect. Before a child is removed from home and placed with another family, **criminal history checks** will be required for each person who resides in the new home before the child is placed there. Child Protective Services may now monitor cases where abuse or neglect is "indicated," rather than just those which are "substantiated." There will be additional public disclosure in cases where a child dies as a result of abuse or neglect. The bill also creates

a statewide group to investigate the sudden and/or unexpected deaths of children.

• **Senate Bill 194** states that if an adult sexually abuses one child in a household, other children will be presumed to be at risk, and appropriate safeguards can be implemented immediately.

• **House Bill 1245** will levy tougher penalties against people who neglect a child. The bill increases the penalty for neglect of a dependent to a Class A felony if the neglect results in the child's death. Penalties also will be increased for contributing to the delinquency of a minor if an adult provides alcohol or a controlled substance to a minor, and its consumption results in any person's death.

Medication Savings

Hoosiers Gain Access to Affordable Prescription Drugs

Legislators continued efforts to protect Hoosiers from the rising costs of prescription drugs this session. Under a plan signed into law, more than **400,000 Hoosiers would gain access to affordable prescription drugs**, with many more qualifying in years to come.

House Bill 1265 enables the state to set up an aggregate prescription drug purchasing program for a select group of participants to negotiate the prices of prescription drugs

from pharmaceutical companies. **Indiana will also be able to enter into joint purchasing agreements with other states, gaining added bargaining power.**

Those eligible for the program will get a prescription drug card to receive a discount when they fill prescriptions at their local drugstores. This program is intended to be a pilot program which, if successful, will be extended to more people in the future.



Helping Hoosier Families



Representative Paul Robertson (center) discusses legislation with Rep. Russ Stilwell (left) and Speaker Pat Bauer (right).

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Creating Hoosier Jobs

Protecting and creating Hoosier jobs and businesses were among the issues of most concern in the 2004 General Assembly. Three bills and a resolution were passed that will aid in the retention and creation of jobs as well as encourage business development and corporate responsibility.

House Resolution 47 calls on the President and Congress to address a growing trade imbalance that has resulted in the loss of more than 2 million manufacturing jobs in the U.S. since 2001. It asks that **trade agreements require that corporations pay fair and competitive wages**, respect the rights of workers to unionize, and adopt workplace

House Bill 1080
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safety and anti-pollution standards equal to those in our country. The resolution also encourages the federal government to **provide economic incentives to sectors that have seen record job losses** due to NAFTA, and address the adverse effects on trade caused by countries that artificially lower the value of their currency relative to the dollar.

House Bill 1080 will help **stimulate Indiana's economy** by providing a price preference to Indiana businesses for public works and procurement contracts. This piece of legislation will focus on Indiana companies first as suppliers for goods and services the state is interested in purchasing.

House Bill 1434 **will benefit low-income businesses by fostering economic development opportunities** in the form of grants for training and technical assistance. The microenterprise partnership program created under the bill will provide assistance to businesses with fewer than five employees.

House Bill 1365 will make the state's research and development tax credit permanent, extend the life of the Hoosier Business Investment Tax Credit and create a new fund to encourage investment in new technology. It also calls for a study of **eliminating corporate tax loopholes in current Indiana law** that cause tax increases on Hoosier homeowners and businesses.

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